History of Horse Racing in Mount Pearl

There has been talk about tennis, softball and baseball as the starting sports in Mount Pearl, yet there were other sports before the above mentioned; horse racing was one of them. "In the 1830's and 1840's Mount Pearl became the rendez-vous of men of means and lovers of horse racing. In 1840 there was erected on 'the Mount' a large open air gallery with benches for the spectators to view lower lands....Pacers were driven by their owners or jockeys" (Graham, 39).

Advertisements in the Evening Telegram informed the population of Newfoundland about the up and coming sport of Mount Pearl; "HORSE RACES To be held at Mount Pearl Driving Park, Tuesday, Sept.3rd, 1889" (Evening Telegram,1889). There were bareback races, trotting races, pony races and free-for-all races, all of which were the favourites of gambling men and women. Spectatorship was immense. Indeed, the horse races "held at Mount Pearl on April 12-13, 1845 under the patronage of Governor Harvey were attended by Prince Henry of the Netherlands, then a visitor of the City. The band of Royal Newfoundland Companies was in attendance" (Graham, 39).

However, with the technological advancement well on its way, horse racing lost its spectatorship's interest; "apart from the Avalon Raceway at the Goulds and the entertainment provided by the harness racing there with its stable of spirited steeds, there are few horses around" (Graham, 39).

Regardless, it's wonderful to hear of such a popular and well respected sport that had its start in the heart of what many of us call home now.

Source:

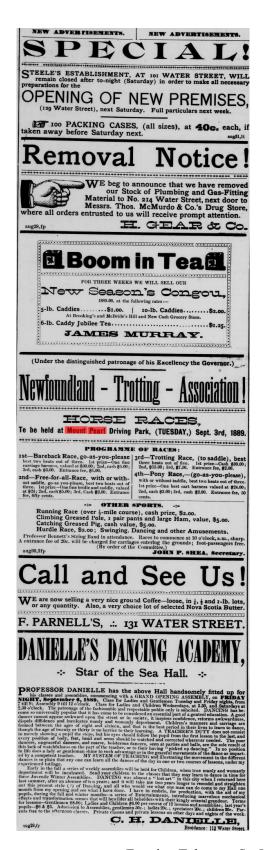
Graham, Frank. *Ready...Set...Go!; A St. John's Sports Pictorial*. Creative Publishers, St. John's Nfld, 1988. Print.

Advertisements that were found in the Evening Telegram about Horse Racing in Mount Pearl:

THE COMING HORSE RACES.

THE proceedings at the preliminary meeting held last night to initiate a day's sport of horse-racing were very successful, and the sum of fifty dollars or so was subscribed immediately by the twenty gentlemen present, comprising Messrs. J. P. Shea. who is the young spirit in the matter, and who explained the object in view, Dr. Mc-Nearn, F. Feehan, Lester, Nagle, Bowers, Roper, Lockett, M. Feehan, Wm. Cook, T. Curran, and others. A general committee of seventeen members was appointed, and a managing committee of four. It is anticipated that the sport will take place on the 3rd of September, which will be next Tuesday week, and the course will be chosen either at Kilbride or Mount Pearl. It was moved, seconded and carried unanimously that after the races a public meeting be convened and a report read giving an account of the collections and disbursements of the fund, and that said report be published in the press.

Evening Telegram St. John's 1889/08/22 The Coming of Horse Races



THE HORSE RACES.

A Pleasant Day at Mount Pearl.

IMMENSE NUMBER OF SPECTATORS.

Sir W. V. Whiteway and Other Prominent Citizens Present.

THE horse-races, yesterday, rather disappointed the expectations of spectators, as respects the enjoyment, excitement and picturesque sight incident to the racing proper, though a good deal has to be overlooked in view of the reluctance of many owners of good steeds to enter. The limited number of competitors accounted for this; for nothing enhances sport like a good field of fleet coursers ridden by jockeys in their red, green, yellow and vari-colored attire. The horses and ponies in the galloping races flashed around the course in a twinkling, the riders urging them on with whip and spur to their utmost speed. One pitied the poor beasts during the terribly severe ordeal, but it was soon over, and then the sagacious creatures, with dilated eyes and panting nostrils, stood quite docile at the winning post, receiving the plaudits of their friends in good temper, and behaving as if something unusual, in which they bore a leading part, was going on. It is to be observed that the side sports were poorly managed; and, in place of being displayed between the racing of the horses, thus imparting variety to the show, were kept back till the afternoon, and then went off at halfcock. Two articles only-a coat and a ham -were thought to be sufficiently valuable to tempt the tired tramp to skin up a greased pole some thirty feet high; they were left to air their banners in neglect till six o'clock, when a ventursome youngster succeeded in mounting quarter way up, only to find the grease too much for him. In the race for the possession of the pig the youths and men who intended to struggle with the slippery customer were expected to pay an entrance fee of ten cents, as if the poor class of people who claimed the privilege of being able to grasp and hold its greased tail, could pay even that small amount. The pig was not released till the last moment, after half the people had left the course, and the action of the committee came in for a good share of censure as being illiberal and paltry. Despite these drawbacks a day of pleasant enjoyment was had; the beautifully bright and sunny character of the day, the fair vision of a diversified landscape bathed in sunshine, the grateful shade of the stately trees, which fringed the grounds, and the exquisitely sweet harmonies of Bennett's band, as well as the horse and foot racing, contributing to that end. Amongst the prominent people present were Sir William and Lady Whiteway, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Bowring, Mr. and Mrs. Studdy, Mr. R. L. Mare, and many others. His Excellency the Governor drove in to Mr. Studdy's and also graced the scene.